

Response to the consultation on ISI's Framework for student educational oversight inspections of private further education colleges and language schools

**Consultation and feedback on proposed changes to how
private further education colleges and language schools in
England are inspected from September 2026**

Full Report – April 2026

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Background

1. ISI is appointed by the Home Office as a designated educational oversight body for private further education providers, including English language schools (together referred to as ‘colleges’ in this document) as set out in the Home Office’s student sponsor guidance [Applying for a Student sponsor licence](#) (also referred to as ‘the student sponsor guidance’).
2. The primary route for international students who wish to study full time, or part time in some limited circumstances, in the UK is through sponsorship by an education provider that holds a student sponsor licence, which is granted by the Home Office.
3. The Home Office’s student sponsorship regime, whereby education providers are granted a licence, is based on two basic principles. They are that:
 - sponsorship is a privilege and not a right, so those who benefit most directly from student migration (education providers) must help to prevent the system from being abused
 - those applying to come to the UK to study must be eligible to do so and must have a reputable education provider who genuinely wishes to teach them.
4. When an education provider is granted a student sponsor licence and therefore becomes a student sponsor, significant trust is placed in it. With this trust comes a responsibility to act in accordance with immigration rules and all parts of the student sponsor guidance.
5. To be issued a student sponsor licence, an education provider must be:
 - a genuine education provider that has acceptable educational quality standards, and is operating lawfully in the UK, complying with all appropriate rules and regulations
 - considered eligible and suitable to hold a student sponsor licence
 - capable of carrying out its duties as a sponsor.
6. An education provider wishing to be a sponsor must demonstrate that all its sites meet acceptable educational quality standards. An educational oversight body appointed the Home Office will make this assessment. Sponsors are required to maintain their education provision to a standard that meets the requirements of educational oversight for all their sites throughout the duration of their student sponsor licence.
7. A private further education provider applying for an educational oversight inspection must have been continuously teaching a course of study that meets the Home Office’s education oversight requirements to UK students for the two years prior to its application.
8. All educational oversight inspections cover the core requirements set by the Home Office. Educational oversight bodies appointed by the Home Office may choose to add further requirements to their educational oversight inspections if they consider it appropriate to do so.

9. Educational oversight bodies decide how to conduct their inspections. They have discretion to fail an education provider where they have reasonable grounds to believe that the education provider is not a credible educational institution and/or they have reasonable doubts about the evidence the provider has submitted.

The consultation

1. ISI consulted on proposed changes to its framework for conducting education oversight inspections of private further education colleges, to be operational from September 2026.
2. The consultation ran from 26 January 2026 to 23 March 2026 (8 weeks).
3. The consultation followed The Gunning Principles, to ensure that the process was a fair, lawful and meaningful:

Gunning Principle	Consultation window – action taken
1. Proposals are still at a formative stage	No final decision was made or predetermined by ISI on any of the proposals within the consultation window or before analysis of the findings.
2. There is sufficient information to give ‘intelligent consideration’	ISI ensured that information was available, accessible, and easy to understand for consultees to provide an informed response. Proposals including the scope of inspections, the timing of inspections, the principles of inspection, the duration of inspections and the inspection process, reporting, triggers for inspection, quality assurance, and the complaints process.
3. There is adequate time for consideration and response	ISI provided sufficient opportunity over an eight-week period for stakeholders to participate in the consultation.
4. ‘Conscientious consideration’ must be given to the consultation responses before a decision is made	ISI has taken consultation responses into account and provided a response to the findings and a summary of any potential modifications.






Method and scope of the consultation

4. Participants were invited to complete a questionnaire, which was sent to all the colleges ISI inspects. The questionnaire was also sent to PFE inspectors currently inspecting PFE settings. ISI sent regular reminders to interested parties, encouraging participation in the consultation process.
5. The questionnaire included 26 questions. Participants were invited to provide free-text responses to each question, in addition to expressing to what extent they agreed with the proposals described in the consultation.
6. The consultation questions were grouped into the following areas:
 - Proposals relating to the scope of inspections and inspection evaluations**
 - Proposals relating to the principles of inspection methodology**
 - Proposals relating to the structure of the framework and the inspection report**
 - Proposals for the inspection type, inspection frequency and duration of inspections**
7. For stakeholders, the consultation created an opportunity to be informed, as well as a formal feedback mechanism to raise issues and ideas, to help shape the outcome of this process.
8. In the consultation process, and methodology and analysis ISI explained how it engaged stakeholders throughout the consultation process, as well as the methodology to be used to analyse the findings and inform the response.
9. The feedback on the proposals presents a summary of responses for each of the questions in the consultation survey. This includes a breakdown of data for closed questions and a summary of key themes to emerge from open questions. Where relevant, other forms of stakeholder feedback are included.
10. ISI's responses to the consultation are set out under each question.

Summary of consultation

11. ISI is grateful to everyone who took the time to respond to the consultation on proposals for ISI's revised framework for student educational oversight inspections of private further education colleges and language schools, to be introduced in September 2026.
12. In total, 21 participants responded to the consultation.
13. As demonstrated in the following sections, we have read all responses carefully and, in accordance with the Gunning Principles, given them *conscientious consideration*.
14. The consultation demonstrates positive responses across the range of the proposals in terms of percentages of respondents who agree with the proposals. Despite this, ISI believes it is particularly important to consider the views of respondents who do not concur with the majority view, and to ensure that due consideration is given to the breadth, richness and nuance of these views. We believe that this strengthens the proposed framework for all.
15. The wealth of views expressed in the text responses is very helpful and demonstrates engagement with the development of the PFE framework.

Consultation responses

1. To what extent do you agree with the proposal that ISI will only inspect PFE colleges and English language schools that either hold a Student Sponsor Licence or are planning to apply for a Student Sponsor Licence within six months of the planned inspection?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	1 - Not at all		23.81%	5
2	2 - To a small extent		9.52%	2
3	3 - To some extent		23.81%	5
4	4 - To a great extent		19.05%	4
5	5 - To a very great extent		23.81%	5
			answered	21






16. A combined 66.67% of respondents indicated at least some level of agreement with the proposal. However, some comments from respondents show that this support is conditional and accompanied by caveats.
17. Respondents raised concerns about the impact on those colleges who do not hold and do not intend to apply for a student sponsor licence. Some respondents expressed the view that many of

the colleges inspected by ISI rely on ISI Educational Oversight to maintain UKVI-recognised accreditation for short-term study and visitor visa routes. There was concern that removing inspection access from such institutions could prevent them from recruiting international students and threaten their viability.

ISI response

18. ISI is appointed by the Home Office as a designated educational oversight body for private further education providers including English language schools as set out in the Home Office’s student sponsor guidance [Applying for a Student sponsor licence](#) (also referred to as the student sponsor guidance).
19. ISI will inspect a college that relies on educational oversight to recruit overseas students. This will be clarified with the Home Office and the inspection framework will reflect this to ensure that any college that relies upon educational oversight inspections for Home Office purposes, can be inspected.
20. ISI will engage with any college requesting inspection. ISI will not refuse inspections for those colleges that rely on educational oversight to provide short- or longer-term courses for overseas students.
21. ISI will take forward the proposal with the adaptations outlined above.

2. To what extent do you agree that the binary judgements that ‘requirements are met’ or ‘requirements are not met’ are clear and appropriate?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	1 - Not at all		14.29%	3
2	2 - To a small extent		14.29%	3
3	3 - To some extent		28.57%	6
4	4 - To a great extent		23.81%	5
5	5 - To a very great extent		19.05%	4
			answered	21

22. A majority (71.43%) expressed at least some agreement with the proposal. However, some of the responses were qualified.
23. While respondents broadly acknowledged that binary judgements are clear, some questioned whether they are sufficiently nuanced or appropriate on their own. The responses indicate concern that an exclusively binary approach risks reducing the value of PFE inspections by limiting

differentiation, weakening incentives for excellence, and diminishing the role of inspection in driving improvement.

ISI response

24. ISI agrees that it is important that inspection reports outline the strengths as well as the relative weaknesses in the colleges we inspect.
25. ISI intends that reporting will focus on whether the requirements for education oversight on which the framework is based are met or not met. The recommended next steps that inspectors identify will give college leaders clear guidance about what can be improved, where all the requirements are met. Where requirements are not met, areas for action will clearly indicate to college leaders the areas of weakness that need to be addressed so that the requirements are met. In these ways, all inspections will have a focus on continual improvement.
26. The report format, the writing guidance for inspectors and the quality assurance processes will ensure that inspection reports capture the nuance and complexity of each college’s strengths and relative weaknesses.
27. The proposal will be taken forward.

3. To what extent do you believe the manageability principle will help to reduce undue workload?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	1 - Not at all		4.76%	1
2	2 - To a small extent		4.76%	1
3	3 - To some extent		38.10%	8
4	4 - To a great extent		23.81%	5
5	5 - To a very great extent		28.57%	6
			answered	21





28. Respondents broadly welcomed the proposal to emphasise manageability. There was consensus that inspection models must remain flexible and context sensitive, particularly for small and specialist providers, if ISI is to reduce burden without undermining inspection quality or increasing pressure on staff.

ISI response

29. ISI welcomes the positive responses and agrees that each inspection must consider the context of the college and that small and specialist colleges need to be considered carefully.

30. Inspectors will carefully consider the context of the individual college and work with college leaders to plan the inspection to reduce any additional workload for college staff.

31. The proposal will be taken forward.

4. To what extent do you agree that the approach to collaboration is clear and appropriate?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	1 - Not at all		0.00%	0
2	2 - To a small extent		4.76%	1
3	3 - To some extent		9.52%	2
4	4 - To a great extent		57.14%	12
5	5 - To a very great extent		28.57%	6
			answered	21

32. Responses show strong support for the collaborative approach, with most respondents viewing it as clear, appropriate, and largely reflective of existing good practice. Some respondents emphasised the need for flexibility and clear signposting, particularly for smaller providers, to ensure collaboration enhances inspection quality without creating unnecessary pressure or workload.

ISI response

33. ISI agrees that each inspection must consider the context of the college and that small and specialist colleges need to be considered carefully.

34. While all college leaders will be offered the opportunity to take part in collaborative inspection activities, no negative inference will be drawn by inspectors if college leaders feel unable to take part in these activities.

35. Lead inspectors will keep in regular contact with college leaders so that they are aware of emerging evaluations and can signpost additional evidence. This is a key aspect of collaboration.

36. The proposal will be taken forward.

5. To what extent do you agree that triangulation and typicality will produce fair and reliable evaluations?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	1 - Not at all	0.00%	0
2	2 - To a small extent	0.00%	0
3	3 - To some extent	9.52%	2
4	4 - To a great extent	33.33%	7
5	5 - To a very great extent	57.14%	12
		answered	21

37. Consultation responses demonstrate very strong support for the use of triangulation and typicality. While respondents acknowledged practical constraints and the need for absolute judgements in some areas, there was clear consensus that, when applied professionally and consistently, triangulation and typicality are essential and effective tools for producing fair, balanced and reliable inspection evaluations.

ISI response

38. Triangulation is the process inspectors use to contextualise and test inspection evidence. Inspectors will look for connected sources of evidence, wherever this is available, to reach valid and reliable judgements.

39. Inspectors gather evidence from a wide range of sources. These include: discussions with college leaders, staff and students; information from the inspection surveys for students and staff; first-hand observations; and scrutiny of documentation and college records.

40. Inspectors will consider: what they are seeing, reading and hearing; why it is important and how it relates to the requirements; how it relates to other evidence; and what further evidence inspectors need to gather.

41. The proposal will be taken forward.

6. To what extent do you agree with the introduction of the principle of proportionality?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	1 - Not at all	0.00%	0
2	2 - To a small extent	0.00%	0
3	3 - To some extent	0.00%	0
4	4 - To a great extent	42.86%	9
5	5 - To a very great extent	57.14%	12
		answered	21

42. There is unequivocal support for the introduction of proportionality. Respondents view it as a necessary, well understood, and appropriate principle that aligns with existing good practice, provided it is applied carefully and does not weaken expectations in critical areas such as safeguarding or systemic compliance.

ISI response

43. ISI will provide clear guidance in the inspection handbook for inspectors about how and when to apply proportionality. The inspection handbook will be published on ISI's website so that leaders and staff in the colleges we inspect understand our inspection methodology.

44. When judging the extent to which a college meets the requirements, inspectors will exercise their professional judgement. They will consider the reasonableness of leaders' decision-making and the impact of those decisions on students' learning, experience and safety.

45. Where there is a relative weakness or minor error, inspectors will consider whether that weakness amounts to a failure to meet one or more of the requirements. The scale and impact of any weaknesses or errors will be taken into consideration by inspectors.

46. If inspectors find that the relative weakness does not indicate a systemic failure and the relative weakness can easily be rectified in a college's processes and/ or provision, inspectors will take a proportionate approach.




47. This will be reflected in the text of the inspection report and will lead to a recommended next step in the inspection report.

48. Where college leaders make amendments to the college's policies, processes or provision during inspections, inspectors will consider the scale and impact of such amendments and consider their impact on inspection judgements. Inspectors may conclude that changes in a policy

document made during an inspection are unlikely to be able to be demonstrated as being effectively implemented by leaders.

49. Weaknesses or errors which are indicative of systemic failings in the college’s processes and/or provision will lead to a judgement that the relevant requirements are not met. Systemic failings include decision-making by leaders based on a lack of understanding of what is required to meet the requirements, or an inability or reluctance to do what is required.

50. The proposal will be taken forward.

7. To what extent do you agree that leadership and management requirements are appropriate?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	1 - Not at all		0.00%	0
2	2 - To a small extent		0.00%	0
3	3 - To some extent		20.00%	4
4	4 - To a great extent		50.00%	10
5	5 - To a very great extent		30.00%	6
			answered	20

51. The consultation responses show strong support for the leadership and management requirements, with most respondents agreeing they are appropriate in principle. Some respondents identified the need for clarity around areas such as financial sustainability, the balance between compliance and leadership quality, and clearer definitions of roles and responsibilities. Addressing these concerns through clearer guidance and refinement would strengthen confidence in the framework and its practical application.




ISI response

52. ISI agrees that clear guidance is important for inspectors and the colleges that ISI inspects.

53. ISI will publish to inspectors and to colleges the inspection framework and the inspection handbook so that there is clarity about the scope of the leadership and management requirements.

54. ISI will assess how each college meets the Home Office’s requirements for financial sustainability, management and governance. This is required so that international students can have reasonable confidence that they should not be at risk of being unable to complete their course because of the financial failure of their education provider.

55. Assessments made by ISI on an institution’s financial sustainability will be made based on information provided to ISI and are not to be relied upon by any individual or body other than UKVI.
56. Inspectors will evaluate whether those with leadership and management responsibility have the knowledge and skills required to ensure that all requirements are met, and that they fulfil those responsibilities effectively so that all the college’s sites meet acceptable educational quality standards.
57. Inspectors will be interested in how college leaders maintain effective quality assurance arrangements to enable enhancement of the quality of students’ learning experience.
58. Inspectors will want to understand how accurate self-evaluation enhances the quality of provision for students or maintenance of high standards and how leaders draw on the views of students and other stakeholders to inform their self-evaluation and any plans for improvement.
59. The proposal will be taken forward.

8. To what extent do you agree that the quality of education requirements are appropriate?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	1 - Not at all		0.00%	0
2	2 - To a small extent		0.00%	0
3	3 - To some extent		14.29%	3
4	4 - To a great extent		47.62%	10
5	5 - To a very great extent		38.10%	8
			answered	21

60. The consultation responses indicate strong support for the quality of education requirements. Respondents view them as fundamentally appropriate and necessary, but some called for rebalancing away from UKVI specific compliance, clearer focus on educational quality and inclusivity, and greater recognition of teaching, staff development, and student support.

ISI response

61. ISI welcomes the nuanced and thoughtful comments that respondents have provided.
62. The Home Office requirements are clear about what colleges are expected to provide for students. ISI is committed to aligning with Home Office requirements. The inspection report will provide the opportunity for inspectors to report on the quality of teaching including for the range of student groups in each college.
63. Inspectors will evaluate how leaders and managers ensure that provision gives international students reasonable confidence in arrangements for maintaining academic standards and quality of the courses that the college offers.
64. Inspectors will evaluate how leaders and managers set and/or maintain academic standards including by ensuring that:
- all courses on offer are valid and suitable for the needs and aptitudes of students
 - all courses on offer to international students lead to qualifications or outcomes which meet the definition of an approved qualification for UKVI purposes
 - the curriculum for each course is well planned and supported by appropriate schemes of work
 - teaching enables students to learn and make progress.
65. The proposal will be taken forward.

9. To what extent do you agree with the focus on safeguarding requirements for students under 18 years of age and vulnerable students?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	1 - Not at all	0.00%	0
2	2 - To a small extent	0.00%	0
3	3 - To some extent	4.76%	1
4	4 - To a great extent	42.86%	9
5	5 - To a very great extent	52.38%	11
		answered	21

66. The consultation responses show overwhelming support for the strengthened focus on safeguarding for students under 18 years old, and vulnerable students. Respondents strongly endorsed the principle, while calling for alignment with statutory guidance, clear definitions, and practical support to ensure consistent, confident, and effective implementation across the sector.

ISI response

67. ISI welcomes the nuanced and thoughtful comments that respondents have provided.

68. ISI will ensure that guidance included in the inspection handbook and framework is clear. Inspectors will refer to the relevant government guidance when considering the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures and the safeguarding culture of the colleges we inspect.

69. Inspectors will evaluate how leaders and managers ensure that appropriate arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of students, and that such arrangements have regard to any guidance for educational settings issued by the Secretary of State for Education for pupils under 18 and vulnerable students, including by ensuring that:

- leaders promote a safeguarding culture which puts the needs of students first
- staff are trained effectively to understand their duties and the college's procedures regarding safeguarding
- attendance, punctuality and course completion are monitored carefully and action is taken when students are absent or persistently late, to improve attendance and/or punctuality
- when a student fails to enrol or otherwise discontinues study and does not fulfil Home Office requirements for attendance, leaders ensure the required report is made to the UKVI
- where the college includes students under the age of 18 or vulnerable adults, government guidance, including *Keeping Children Safe in Education* is understood, embedded in policy and practice and consistently followed.

70. The proposal will be taken forward.

10. To what extent do you agree that safer recruitment requirements are appropriate?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	1 - Not at all	0.00%	0
2	2 - To a small extent	0.00%	0
3	3 - To some extent	4.76%	1
4	4 - To a great extent	33.33%	7
5	5 - To a very great extent	61.90%	13
		answered	21

71. The consultation responses demonstrate strong support for the safer recruitment requirements. Respondents view them as appropriate, necessary, and largely well established in practice. The




key message from qualitative feedback is not a call for change in principle, but for greater clarity, consistency, and integration with safeguarding and leadership requirements to support effective and proportionate implementation.

ISI response

72. ISI will ensure that guidance included in the inspection handbook and framework is clear. ISI will provide training for inspectors and signpost the relevant government guidance to the colleges we inspect.

73. The proposal will be taken forward.

11. To what extent do you agree that premises, health and safety, and accommodation requirements are appropriate?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	1 - Not at all		0.00%	0
2	2 - To a small extent		0.00%	0
3	3 - To some extent		14.29%	3
4	4 - To a great extent		42.86%	9
5	5 - To a very great extent		42.86%	9
			answered	21

74. The consultation responses show strong endorsement of the premises, health and safety, and accommodation requirements. Feedback comments indicate that the requirements are viewed as appropriate and necessary but would benefit from clearer language (particularly around homestay accommodation), clearer scope, and proportionate application that recognises existing regulation and varied provider contexts.

ISI response

75. ISI will ensure that guidance included in the inspection handbook and framework is clear, including in relation to homestay accommodation. The handbook and framework will be published on ISI's website so that inspectors and the colleges we inspect are clear about how inspectors will gather and evaluate evidence in this aspect of provision.

76. ISI provides regular training for inspectors.

77. The proposal will be taken forward.

12. To what extent do you agree that attendance monitoring and UKVI reporting expectations are appropriate?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	1 - Not at all	0.00%	0
2	2 - To a small extent	0.00%	0
3	3 - To some extent	4.76%	1
4	4 - To a great extent	33.33%	7
5	5 - To a very great extent	61.90%	13
		answered	21

78. The consultation responses show strong support for attendance monitoring and UKVI reporting expectations. Respondents largely regard these requirements as appropriate, necessary, and reflective of existing practice, with only minor requests for clarification, particularly around application to students under 18 years old and the extent of change from the current framework




ISI response

79. ISI will ensure that guidance included in the inspection handbook and framework is clear. The handbook and framework will be published on ISI's website so that inspectors and colleges are clear about how inspectors will gather and evaluate evidence in this aspect of provision.

80. ISI provides regular training for inspectors.

81. The proposal will be taken forward.

13. To what extent do you agree that requirements for colleges to provide clear pre-enrolment information, induction, and complaints guidance for students are appropriate?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	1 - Not at all		0.00%	0
2	2 - To a small extent		0.00%	0
3	3 - To some extent		5.00%	1
4	4 - To a great extent		45.00%	9
5	5 - To a very great extent		50.00%	10
			answered	20

82. The consultation responses demonstrate strong support for the requirements on pre-enrolment information, induction, and complaints guidance. Respondents view these expectations as appropriate, necessary, and largely embedded in current practice. Minor feedback focused on clarifying scope and terminology, rather than calling for any substantive change.

ISI response

83. ISI will ensure that guidance included in the inspection handbook and framework is clear. The handbook and framework will be published on ISI's website so that inspectors and colleges we are clear about how inspectors will gather and evaluate evidence in this aspect of provision.

84. Inspectors will evaluate the effectiveness and appropriateness of the information leaders provide to students to ensure that that:

- students are provided with the information, advice and support they need to make well-informed decisions about the suitability of the courses to meet their needs and aspirations, prior to their enrolment
- a suitable programme of induction is in place for all students
- students are provided with details of the college's complaints policy.

85. The proposal will be taken forward.

14. To what extent do you agree that requirements for careers and further education advice are appropriate?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	1 - Not at all	0.00%	0
2	2 - To a small extent	0.00%	0
3	3 - To some extent	28.57%	6
4	4 - To a great extent	33.33%	7
5	5 - To a very great extent	38.10%	8
		answered	21

86. The consultation responses indicate broad support for requirements on careers and further education advice, alongside a clear message that such expectations must be contextual, proportionate, and relevant. While widely appropriate, respondents stressed that a one-size-fits-all approach would not reflect the varied realities of PFE providers, particularly those offering short-term or specialist provision.

ISI response






87. ISI agrees that inspectors should always be mindful of the context of each college. However, ISI believes that all students should be provided with impartial and appropriate careers guidance including about further education options, where appropriate.

88. Inspectors will be interested to understand how well the proprietor, leaders and managers provide up-to-date, relevant and informed advice and guidance including, where appropriate, on relevant careers and or further education opportunities that are appropriate for students on completion of the course(s) studied including by ensuring that:

- students are provided with the advice and support that they require to make informed choices about their next steps including about relevant careers.

89. The proposal will be taken forward.

15. To what extent do you agree that there should only be one type of inspection?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	1 - Not at all		14.29%	3
2	2 - To a small extent		9.52%	2
3	3 - To some extent		23.81%	5
4	4 - To a great extent		28.57%	6
5	5 - To a very great extent		23.81%	5
			answered	21

90. The responses show a mixed view on introducing a single inspection type. While just over half of respondents expressed strong agreement, feedback reveals some concerns about proportionality, provider diversity, cost, and unintended consequences. Some respondents favoured retaining a flexible, risk-based inspection model, combining different inspection types and frequencies, while accepting that more intensive inspection is appropriate where concerns or major changes arise.

ISI response





91. ISI is grateful for the thoughtful responses to the consultation question.

92. The purpose of a single inspection type is to simplify the process for colleges. One inspection type will provide consistency in understanding the scope and methodology of inspections.

93. ISI is mindful of the cost of inspection. The revised framework aims to provide value for money for colleges. The introduction of a single inspection type is not designed to increase the cost for the colleges we inspect.

94. The proposal will be taken forward. ISI will carefully consider the comments respondents have submitted in implementing the proposal for a single type of inspection.

16. To what extent do you agree that the proposed two-year routine inspection interval is appropriate?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	1 - Not at all		0.00%	0
2	2 - To a small extent		14.29%	3
3	3 - To some extent		33.33%	7
4	4 - To a great extent		28.57%	6
5	5 - To a very great extent		23.81%	5
			answered	21

95. The consultation responses show that all respondents agreed with the proposal to some extent. However, there was a varied view on the appropriateness of a two-year routine inspection interval. Just over half of respondents expressed strong agreement, a minority voiced reservations in relation to cost, and impact on provider behaviour. The findings suggest that support for a shorter inspection interval is conditional and strongest where it is applied flexibly and in response to risk, rather than as a uniform requirement across all providers.

ISI response






96. The Home Office requires that all colleges be routinely be inspected at least once every four years. The Home Office also requires that colleges will have an interim health check every year, or every two years if the college is considered to meet the highest educational standards.

97. ISI believes that in order to fulfil Home Office requirements and to ensure that educational quality standards are maintained, ISI should conduct a student education oversight inspection for every college, routinely at least once every two years.

98. For most of the colleges we inspect, this model of inspection frequency will reduce the number of inspection events over a four-year period. This aligns closely with the inspection principle of manageability. The proposal will provide greater certainty for colleges in terms of the nature of inspection and the projected cost of inspection.

99. ISI will take the proposal forward.

17. To what extent do you agree that the typical three-day schedule is appropriate?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	1 - Not at all		15.00%	3
2	2 - To a small extent		15.00%	3
3	3 - To some extent		30.00%	6
4	4 - To a great extent		30.00%	6
5	5 - To a very great extent		10.00%	2
			answered	20

100. The responses indicate some concern about the proposed typical three-day schedule, particularly the weighting toward off-site activity and proposal for a single on-site day. While some viewed the model as workable or advantageous, others felt that that it risks weakening evidence quality.

101. Some respondents favoured a flexible, risk-based approach, with greater emphasis on on-site inspection, and time allocation determined by institutional context rather than a fixed inspection template.





ISI response

102. ISI agrees that a flexible approach to the inspection length is appropriate. The colleges that we inspect vary in size and complexity. The proposals will include provision for inspection length to be extended where appropriate, for instance for large providers, or where there are multiple sites or where student accommodation is a consideration.

103. The number of on-site inspection days can be extended for large, multi-site providers or for those providers that offer or arrange accommodation for students.

104. The proposal will be taken forward. However, the framework will lay out the flexible approach to the different contexts of colleges that respondents have suggested

18. To what extent do you agree that the typical three-day schedule should be extended by one additional on-site day for large colleges and/or colleges with multiple sites and for those with residential provision?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	1 - Not at all		0.00%	0
2	2 - To a small extent		10.00%	2
3	3 - To some extent		20.00%	4
4	4 - To a great extent		30.00%	6
5	5 - To a very great extent		40.00%	8
			answered	20

105. The responses show strong support for extending the inspection schedule for large, multi-site, and residential colleges. Respondents view additional on-site time as necessary to ensure thorough, fair, and reliable inspection outcomes, particularly where residential provision is involved. At the same time, there was a clear call for flexibility, with inspection duration determined by institutional context rather than a uniform model.




ISI response

106. ISI agrees that a flexible approach to the inspection length is desirable and appropriate. The colleges that we inspect vary in size and complexity. The proposals include provision for inspection length to be extended where appropriate, for instance for large providers, or where there are multiple sites or where accommodation is provided for students.

107. The number of on-site inspection days can be extended for large, multi-site providers or for those providers that offer or arrange accommodation for students.

108. The proposal will be taken forward, with a flexible approach depending on the context of each college.

19. To what extent do you agree that the framework and therefore the report structure is clear and useful?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	1 - Not at all		0.00%	0
2	2 - To a small extent		0.00%	0
3	3 - To some extent		19.05%	4
4	4 - To a great extent		66.67%	14
5	5 - To a very great extent		14.29%	3
			answered	21




109. The consultation responses show strong support for the clarity and usefulness of the framework and report structure. Respondents broadly regard it as fit for purpose and well organised. Qualitative feedback focused on enhancing coherence, evaluative balance, and presentation, rather than on fundamental change, suggesting that targeted refinements could further strengthen the framework's effectiveness and accessibility for different audiences.

ISI response

110. ISI is grateful for the helpful suggestions provided by respondents to the consultation. ISI will consider the responses in the final inspection framework and related documentation.

111. The proposal will be taken forward.

20. To what extent do you agree that the complaints route is sufficiently clear?






Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	1 - Not at all		0.00%	0
2	2 - To a small extent		0.00%	0
3	3 - To some extent		14.29%	3
4	4 - To a great extent		42.86%	9
5	5 - To a very great extent		42.86%	9
			answered	21

112. The consultation responses show strong support for the clarity of the complaints route. However, a small strand of feedback points to the need for review and refinement of the underlying complaints policy, particularly to ensure transparency, fairness, and clarity around how all parties involved in a complaint can respond.

ISI response

113. The proposal will be taken forward. However, ISI will be consult on a revised complaints policy that is specific to educational oversight inspections of private further education colleges and language schools.

21. To what extent do you agree that the proposed framework overall is clear and manageable?



Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	1 - Not at all		4.76%	1
2	2 - To a small extent		4.76%	1
3	3 - To some extent		23.81%	5
4	4 - To a great extent		57.14%	12
5	5 - To a very great extent		9.52%	2
			answered	21

114. The consultation responses indicate that the proposed framework is generally well received as clear and workable, with a strong majority supporting it in principle. Some feedback highlights a need for greater specificity, clearer communication of changes, and closer alignment between stated principles and inspection practice.

ISI response

115. ISI will provide greater detail and clarity in the inspection framework and handbook documents. ISI will also provide further guidance in the frequently asked questions and answers document on ISI’s website. This will be available to all the colleges we inspect.

116. The proposal will be taken forward.

22. Do you support Option A (Adopt the proposed framework without change) or Option B (Adopt the proposed framework with modifications)? Please explain your choice in the comments.				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Option A		14.29%	3
2	Option B		85.71%	18
			answered	21

117. The consultation responses show overwhelming support for Option B: adopting the proposed framework with modifications. Respondents broadly endorse the framework’s direction and structure. Some respondents expressed concerns about inspection design, on-site time, the loss of evaluative judgements, and exclusion of non-sponsor providers.

118. The qualitative evidence suggests that targeted revisions are required to ensure the framework remains rigorous, proportionate, improvement focused and fit for the full diversity of PFE and language school provision.

ISI response

119. ISI is grateful for the helpful comments provided by respondents. ISI has responded to each of the questions in this document and will continue to consider the themes emerging from the consultation in the design and implementation of the PFE inspection framework.

120. A comprehensive programme of inspector training will also be delivered in advance of the new framework to ensure high levels of validity, reliability and quality assurance throughout the inspection process.

121. The proposals will be taken forward including with the amendments ISI has laid out in response to the consultation questions.

ISI would like to thank all stakeholders for their engagement in this consultation. We are committed to keeping all stakeholders informed about the framework development process and ensuring all feel prepared for the introduction of a new inspection framework in September 2026.